

Relevancy of Training for Certified Water Works Operators

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Why training relevancy is important

Certified water works operators are on the front line of protecting public health by ensuring the water they serve to customers is safe and reliable. To make certain operators have the knowledge they need to prevent waterborne illnesses, the Washington State Department of Health Office of Drinking Water (ODW) has training relevancy criteria.

ODW requires all certified operators to meet the professional growth requirement to remain certified. There are several options for meeting the requirement. Most operators do so by earning at least 3.0 Continuing Education Units (CEU) or college credits during each professional growth reporting period in coursework directly relevant to drinking water.

Before signing up for training to help meet the professional growth requirement, operators should confirm the training is relevant and the sponsor is awarding CEU or college credit. Many courses offer CEU or college credit and may be relevant for other professions, but not for water-works certification purposes.

Definition of “training directly relevant to drinking water”

Training applied toward the water works operator professional growth requirement in Washington must meet ODW’s relevancy criteria. Relevant training means training that:

- (1) Is approved by the Department of Health;
- (2) Has an influence on water quality, water supply, or public health protection; and
- (3) Is directly related to the operation or maintenance of a water system; or
- (4) Is directly related to managing the operation or maintenance of a water system.

Examples of relevant training topics

- ◆ **Utility management** – drinking water regulatory compliance, capacity development, rate setting, financial viability, water system security and responding to drinking water emergencies.
- ◆ **Utility-focused safety** – safe chlorine handling, trenching and shoring, and working in confined spaces.
- ◆ **Water right issues** – related to source water protection and supply.
- ◆ **Water quality** – treatment techniques, water quality monitoring and maintaining test-result records.
- ◆ **Operational subjects** – pump maintenance and repair, cross-connection control and backflow prevention.
- ◆ **Specialized computer software** – applications used in utility operation.
- ◆ **Water conservation** – promoting conservation and improving water use efficiency.

Types of training not directly relevant to drinking water

Training on general topics – or topics only indirectly related to water system operation – is not considered relevant. These topics may be more directly related to another field of work.

Examples of training topics not relevant to drinking water

- ◆ **General management** – time management, supervision, personnel issues and communicating with difficult people.
- ◆ **Personal safety** – first aid, CPR, defensive driving and flagging.
- ◆ **Endangered Species Act** – wildlife protection or recovery.
- ◆ **Basic computer skills, programming and troubleshooting.**
- ◆ **Wastewater training.**
- ◆ **Most HAZMAT training.**
- ◆ **Road and street maintenance.**
- ◆ **Pesticide application.**
- ◆ **General plumbing or electrical code courses targeted to electricians or plumbers.**

Activities that focus on information sharing, rather than an organized continuing education experience, do not qualify for CEU and will not be accepted by ODW. For example, meeting attendance, displays and exhibitions, and association membership or leadership do not qualify.

For more information on course relevancy and CEU assignment

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You may also call (253) 288-3369 or, toll-free in Washington, (800) 562-0858.

